TL 4139

COMISSION ON HUMAN RIGHTS
FORTY-FIFTH SESSION
ITEM 12 OF THE AGENDA

Mr. President, Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am Timorese, a former civil servant of the Portuguese colonial administration and, until my departure from East Timor last October, was working in the Indonesian Government's Department of Information.

Considering the general conditions in East Timor since the invasion of my country by the Indonesian army, I recognise that my situation was privileged. This was because, firstly, I remained in Dili and gave myself up to the invaders at the time of the invasion itself, while the majority of my contemporaries sought refuge and resisted up in the mountains and, secondly, because I was integrated into the Indonesian Civil Service.

In spite of this, I chose to leave my country because I did not feel at ease under foreign occupation, and also in order to escape from persecution, from which no Timorese is ever safe. Another reason for leaving was my wish to make international public opinion aware, by way of my testimony, of the suffering of our oppressed and tortured people because it continues to reclaim its freedom and fight for its right to independence.

Mr. President, I have witnessed innumerable cases of human rights violations perpetrated by the Indonesian military. Since, here, I am unable to refer to all of them I will cite those which I experienced at closest range:

- The day after the arrival of the Indonesian troops in Dili, on 8 December 1975, I went along with a group of my contemporaries to report to the invading forces' headquarters. On the way we were intercepted by an army unit which, on recognising one of our group in a photograph

of a Fretilin demonstration, took him off to the Sota beach and gunned him down with automatic weapons.

- Three days later, on 11 December, I was arrested. They tortured me with electric shocks: they tied my thumbs together, then placed between them wires which were attached either to the electricity supply or to the batteries of manually operated telephones.

- On 8 October 1976 I was rearrested, taken to the Sang-Tai-Hoo building, and again tortured, just because they were unable to get an 8 mm. film projector (which they had found in my house) to work. They made me start up the projector and then they forced three prisoners (a young girl and two older women) to watch pornographic films. They raped them and sexually abused them throughout that day.

- In 1978 Juvenal Inácio (my brother-in-law), a Fretilin member, was captured and taken to Dili. The Deputy Chief of the Secret Service, a Lieutenant Colonel Bambang, allowed Juvenal's wife and two daughters to visit him. On the third visit, however, they were told he was unavailable because he was being interrogated by the then Minister of Defence, General Yusuf. The following day they were told that Juvenal had been taken away. His whereabouts were never revealed and today he continues to be "disappeared".

- On 13 December 1980 I was arrested and tortured for the third time, falsely accused of having taken part in the attack and destruction of Dili's television building. They tortured me with electric shocks and burned me with cigarettes because I would not confess to something I had not done and because I refused their request to falsely accuse the Administrator of the Borough of Dili, Mário Sanches da Costa, and the Deputy Governor of East Timor, Francisco Lopes da Cruz, both of whom had been appointed to these positions by the occupiers.

- To be brief, I will outline a further recent case: on 9 July

- 1988 three students from Cribas, one of whom was my cousin Domingos Alves, were forced by Red Berets to go into the bush and try to contact the Resistance. They carried with them a document which was supposed to serve as a justification in case they were intercepted by any Indonesian battalion. The first day they were found by the 125 Battalion which, ignoring said document, separated Domingos from the other two and proceeded to torture him, using a knife. When they heard his screams, the other two tried to escape: one was shot, but the other managed to reach the village and informed Domingos' relatives. Domingos' father protested to the Red Berets, but only after three days did he manage to get authorisation to go to the place it had happened. He found the body of his son: his head had been severed from the body and sexual organs cut off and stuffed into the mouth. Back at the village he received orders not to divulge what had happened. It was an Indonesian that reported all this to me, and later I got confirmation from relatives.

Mr. President, I would also like to speak a little about freedom of movement and the visits to East Timor.

I began to plan my departure from East Timor in 1984, when my sister and children managed to leave under the protection of the International Red Cross to reunite with my parents in Australia. As she was the wife of Juvenal Inácio (about whose "disappearance" I have already spoken) I had to pay 2,500,000 Rupees (US $ 1,500) to obtain a document stating that she was not involved in subversive activities.

I later began to win favour with the Secret Service and in 1986 was invited to request permission to visit my family in Australia. I was the first Timorese by birth to obtain authorisation to visit relatives abroad. My departure for Australia must have been useful propaganda for Indonesia, but my wife and a friend had to sign a document accepting responsibility in case I did not return.

In 1988 I managed to get authorisation for my wife and five children to visit relatives in Australia. This time I had to sign the declaration of responsibility in case of their non-return. I was not allowed to leave my neighbourhood without permission but, claiming it was necessary for reasons connected with my work, a permit was given. I travelled to Kupang in Indonesian Timor, and from there to Jakarta. There I managed to buy (for 9 million Rupees) an authorisation from the Secret Service (BAIS) to leave Indonesia, as well as passports for me and my sister-in-law. Our relatives, including my wife, only learned of our escape once we were out of Indonesia.

If time allowed I could speak about the visits of foreigners to East Timor, organised by the Secret Service and by the Department of Information where I was working. This latter Department is headed by a Timorese, but 95% of the officials have come from Indonesia. They choose which places are to be visited, as well as the people who may speak to the visitors. The crowds may only shout out "Long live Indonesia" and "We want integration". Time constraints, however, do not allow me to expand on this subject.

Distinguished members of the Commission, I appeal to you and to the governments you represent to study most carefully the situation of generalised repression which has afflicted East Timor for over 13 years.

Mr. President, Ladies and Gentlemen, I am grateful for your attention.

João Maria dos Reis

Anti-Slavery Society